



## Social Media and the Reshaping of Religious Identity in Youth

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### Abstract

In recent years, much research has shed light on social structure and interpretation concerns that have highlighted problems with religious tolerance and intolerance. Social constructions have changed as a result of Internet-based connections and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter Instagram, etc. which have reopened old discussions about paradigms of peace from a fresh viewpoint. To understand the correlations between social media usage and attitudes impacting religious tolerance and intolerance, this study evaluated previously published data regarding attitudes and stereotype modifications via research on the Muslim-Hindu interaction in Nepal. An online and offline survey is used to assess the research hypothesis about online platform usage frequency, relationship-bridging attitudes and actions, religion, life happiness, and social trust among youngsters. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive association between Facebook and YouTube usage frequency and views toward religious intolerance especially after being influenced by Indian Islamophobic media as it is the neighboring country of Nepal, with an enhanced relationship bridging both online and off. Additionally, the paper aims to show the correlations between heavy social media users and individuals who cited social media as the cause of their eventual offline intolerance. The findings of this study are beneficial to individuals trying to comprehend and take part in peacemaking in a society that is continuously changing, always linked, and mediated by the Internet.

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## Introduction

The development of technology arbitrates communication has brought about an unparalleled change in how people connect and engage with one another in societies. One important effect of this expansion is the emergence of a society that is technology arbitrates. However, without mentioning Social Media use within the global community, it is impossible to envision and understand this " technology arbitrates communication" or its result, the " technology arbitrates community." By way of explanation, individuals all over the globe use digital platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc., to promote their views, interests, values, and initiatives. On various social media platforms, many people are also using self-generated and self-oriented communications to communicate and transfer words, graphics, and audio. As a result, discussions on social media's effects and implications, difficulties, and dangers have become inescapable in academic debate, especially when it comes to the topic of religious tolerance in modern-day Nepal. Hatred toward others has been spread via social media.

We have known that many important international human rights agreements provide the freedom of religion or belief. It covers a wide variety of liberties, including the freedom to practice, observe, and teach one's religion or believe in private or in public, alone or in community with others, and the freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of one's choosing. Additionally, the freedom of religion or belief covers all types of beliefs, including theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic beliefs as well as the ability to keep one's religion or belief a secret. It also includes the freedom of thinking and personal convictions in all areas of life.

Nepal has a population that follows a variety of faiths and beliefs. Nearly 81.3 % of Nepal's citizenry is Hindu, making up the vast majority of the nation's people. Buddhism is the country's second most widely practiced religion, with 9.04 %; Islam is the third most common religious doctrine, with 4.38 %; Kiratism is the fourth, with 3.04% of the population; and Christianity is the fifth, with 1.41 percent of the population. 2 Less than 1% of Nepal's population practices any of the other five faiths that the government has officially recorded (Nepal, 2018). Muslims, who make up roughly 4% of the inhabitants of Nepal, have coexisted peacefully with the country's Hindu majority for many years. They came to the country as immigrants but built strong communities., Nepal always took pride in its tradition of religious tolerance. But in the recent era through well-known Indian news outlets and media platforms, Hindu nationalist extremists and India's Islamophobic media are using different factors to spread hatred toward Nepal.

Since everyone is impacted by interpersonal conflict, unfavorable views, and prejudices, meaningful answers to some of the most fundamental concerns of human interaction remain elusive. Religion and conflict have a long history in human history. The pervasiveness of conflict serves as a reminder of the universality of the need

for appropriate solutions. When people engage in new ways, there is more potential for conflict and new strategies for resolving it. Innovative channels of communication and socializing may prove to be both areas for debate and new paradigms for peace with the introduction of Internet-based social media and its penetration into information-based societies (Ess et al., 2007; Possamai et al., 2020).

### **Statement of Problem**

Many conflicts appear to have religious roots on the surface but really develop in religious circumstances, use religious terminology, and emerge along religious lines. Due to society's general failure to comprehend the real causes of most of this conflict, erroneous assumptions are frequently drawn, which have an adverse impact on behaviors and legislation and further complicate an already complicated problem. As a result, we are no closer to resolving problems that date back many years. Knowledge gains have also contributed to a greater understanding of how the human brain functions, just as technological advances in destructive capacities have made the hazards of unsolved concerns intolerable. Additionally, new organizational and socialization patterns have been introduced by technological pioneers in online social media. Opposing sides in long-running conflicts have mostly accepted these new patterns. There is reason to believe that a new and increasing realm of possibilities is possible since the subject of how people connect with one another lies at the heart of every conflict, including religious intolerance.

So, in this paper, social media is discussed because it has an impact on attitudes and is linked to tolerance/intolerance. Hence the research aims to deeper analyze; the shape, character, and scope of social media's influence on promoting religious intolerance.

As a result, it is essential to examine the characteristics of social media and religious networks. Social media may be a strong instrument without a doubt, but it is unclear how this power might foster interreligious understanding. To find the finest methods for utilizing social media in the ongoing effort to bring about peace, this must be seriously evaluated. As a result, I see the utmost importance in doing an urgent investigation of the role of religion in social media and new interreligious communication paradigms.

### **Religion and Social Media**

Technologies have always had a major role in politics, religion, and society. As a result, many studies have been conducted to determine how social and technical aspects affect people's habits and ideals (Bargh et al., 2002; Cheong, 2012; Cobb, 1998; Hall et al., 2019; Turkle, 2011; Wagner, 2011). If we look at religion in social media; Media content and its purported cultural and moral qualities have received a lot of attention. The

criticism of social media, however, bemoans the allegedly predominately negative and anti-social (even anti-religious) sentiments. What opportunities exist for religion and religious values if most of the social media public dialogue is regularly characterized by opposing and adversarial viewpoints? Social media has been accused of being an addictive force that has a severe psychological impact on people's relationships and social lives. Social media has been said to govern everyday life, dictating when we eat, sleep, socialize, and even reproduce (Hall et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2010). Traditional religions are interested in these duties and functions, at the very least, and it is important for the media to play a significant part in setting the conditions or atmosphere in which religion must exist.

According to Stout, a larger understanding of worship is necessary since denominations are unable to completely consider the growing variety of religious and mystical experiences. Popular culture's social media platforms are also significant because they help people build groups, orient their beliefs, provoke intense emotions, and include ritualized behaviors.

Users frequently utilize religious terminology to describe their experiences when this happens through social media such as the internet, movies, and other forms of media (Stout, 2012). People of many religions, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, utilize social media to varied degrees. Many individuals are searching for religious significance rooted in popular culture's social media at the same time.

Further, In his analysis of neo-Hindu philosophers on religious plurality, author P.S. Daniel writes, "philosophies and viewpoints. Reverting to Vedic dharma, according to certain philosophers, is the answer. Nevertheless, individuals like Vivekananda and Gandhi had a realistic understanding that all people could not be unified under a single, rigid faith. Numerous diverse religions will coexist with mankind for as long as it does." (Stout, 2012). Therefore, rather than asserting that all faiths are equal, unique, or aiming towards the same thing, it is vital to recognize the diversity of religions to create religious peace. Respect for one another should be maintained because each faith offers something distinctive. Because misperception of other religions is the cause of conflicts and rivalries, interfaith discussion is crucial for a peaceful coexistence.

Reasonable arguments for the viability of virtual reality in the form of digitized settings have been made by a number of academics in current history. Google glass, in the words of Jennifer Cobb, is "a location that appears separated from the material realm." A digital universe is entered. One exits a virtual environment. When someone assumes the role of their avatar in a particular virtual environment, their "appearance" changes. Additionally, there is no eating, resting, or growing in such digital environments. Sometimes people have even viewed the feeling of being in a digital reality as a form of digital paradise or, as Cobb puts it, "the Platonic realm incarnate." (Jennifer Cobb, 1998). Such a world simply beckons our desire to live there. We create the

monitor an obsession; we crave it. We not only seek to view the screen but also wish to be shown in it, according to Wagner, who claims that "the sensation of engaging with virtual reality is marked by tremendous crave." (Wagner, 2012).

According to Heidi Campbell, digital communication technologies foster interconnected community structures, stimulate exploration with religious identity construction and self-presentation, and promote concurrently drawing from various and diverse religious sources and experiences. According to him, blogs and other digital platforms are evolving into something like to a hybrid of religious journals, memoirs, and individualized emails, enabling users to share their daily thoughts and religious rituals publicly (Campbell, 2003).

In current history, social media platforms have increasingly taken over as the main online action hubs, especially for young people and teenagers. Ellison and Boyd have noted social media platforms as places where people in this age group establish their identities. Particularly, Facebook has been investigated as a site for online identity creation. Additionally, Facebook's religious groups have been noticed as a tool that is becoming more and more prominent. Furthermore, some authors claim that spirituality has been discovered to be a component in foretelling Facebook user participation (Ess et al., 2007; Possamai et al., 2020).

As we can extract, the connection between religion and social media is so strong that, depending on how it is perceived and applied, it may either bring harmony or serve as a barrier to our society. Since youngsters are more involved on social media they are easily brainwashed with different posts and captions they go through, or we may also say they wrongly interpret that information resulting in negative outcomes in their attitude towards some spiritual group.

The online world has an influence on interpersonal life in addition to faith. The innate personalities of society in some way bind them to the site's network. A social environment is a place where individuals may educate. They will probably imitate the behaviors of their parents, friends, or neighbors. They are persuaded in this way to upgrade their phone and engage in online gaming. It is now also a dependable supply during times of stress or difficulty. They utilize the internet more frequently the more psychologically conflicted they are. The explanation for this is provided by the scientific dominance hypothesis. This suggests that human development and evolution have coincided with technology advancement. However, there has been a mental conflict among young people about online use. The pursuit of one's personal desires and upholding one's moral and societal obligations are at odds. In terms of psychology, it is a struggle between the id and super-ego when utilizing modern technologies. Lastly, there exists a disparity between the various social and economic groups of individuals. The difference amongst various age groups can also be seen. This may also cause

miscommunication or even hostility between them. Ultimately, this hypothesis has implications for youngsters, electronics, neurology, spirituality, and social science. Such concepts will guide my analysis.

Talking about Nepal, the ratio of Internet usage has reached to 70.41 % according to data of 2019 (Nepal Telecom authority, 2019) where the majority are young individuals. Today's youth no longer like spending time with their parents. They are becoming farther apart every day. They might only have a few friends in real life, but they may have thousands of pals on digital networking. Despite spending a lot of time on digital networking, they dislike talking, traveling, and other forms of social interaction. To further explore the effect of usage of social media in recent days in shaping the behaviors of youngsters when the social media is more filled with religion-related crimes, genocides, and Islamophobic speeches that even increased during Pandemic Covid-19 of Indian Media which is excessively exposed in Nepal.

### **Nepal's Social Platform and Religious Life**

With an area of 381,200 square kilometers, Nepal is a tiny nation. It is centered between India in the east and south and Tibet in the north. This nation's land is split into three sections. High mountains are at the top, hills are in the middle, and flat Terai is at the bottom. The 2011 census indicates that there are about 26 million people living in Nepal. The number will undoubtedly rise in the census in 2021. Three distinct groups of Nepalese make up the majority of this community. They are Nepalese natives as well as Indo-Nepalese and Tibeto-Nepalese. Because of this, Nepalese people may appear to have brown or white complexion, and they may also resemble Indians and Chinese. Nepal is distinctive and lovely because of its diverse skin tone and facial features. Nepal contains more than 50 languages and over 36 different ethnic groups. The primary national language, however, is Nepali, which is spoken across the country. Due to the diversity of faiths and traditions among all the ethnic groups, Nepal is a nation with a rich cultural heritage.

The predominant religious doctrine in Nepal is Hinduism. This is the reason Nepal was referred to be a Hindu state prior to becoming a secular state in 2007. Conservative Hindu organizations and activist organizations continue to work toward the restoration of the Hindu state. So, Hindus make up the bulk of the people (86%) in Nepal whereas, Muslims make up (5%) of the country's population. There has been a harmonious atmosphere until recently when the flame of hate with misconceptions and political hypocritical plans started blazing in India flooding its politically captured media it sent a spark to its neighboring nations mainly through the posts on Facebook and YouTube, that built negative thoughts in the minds of young fellows following some Hindu extremists and naive individuals.

Religion is a form of meditation, while the online world is a technological one. Although each is a distinct creature, they are connected in some manner. People have created technology that enables them to keep their

religious life online and sense the presence of their deity. The benefit is misused by politically affiliated agencies in order to create a grapple among the public for personal benefit.

The goal of almost every religion in the world is to spread its teachings. They wish to be known and their beliefs to be known to other religions. A satisfying moment is when one's religious community gains new members and makes disciples. The internet is doing a terrific job in helping people attain their aim of showing a growing number of followers. Due to the physical distance before the internet, it was challenging to spread one's beliefs across the country. Everyone can discuss their beliefs digitally and even reach a wider audience. The net is the ideal medium for inspiring, influencing, attracting, and even converting people from one faith to the other.

No doubt that religious organizations also use the media for formal announcements or marketing advertisements. The easiest way to spread information about any religious holiday, lecture, or meeting is now through social media. This kind of religious organization occasionally organizes free medical clinics, blood drives, food or clothing distributions, and other charitable events. With the help of digital technology, all these humanitarian endeavors receive extensive advertising. They rely on the web to hire new employees for their company.

Nowadays, individuals criticize other religions in addition to sharing information about their own. The most popular tendency is to make films or post critical remarks on digital networking about other faiths. Social media has evolved into a venue for expressing one's religious convictions. It occasionally caused naïve religious believers' feelings to be harmed. But this can't prevent; in fact, it's getting worse in our culture. Most individuals frequently conceal their own spiritual infirmities while highlighting the infirmities of others.

For example, Hindu societies make it a huge deal when a Muslim does anything improper and utilizes the media to broadcast and propagate it throughout the world and same do the Muslim group (Mogul et al., 2024). The new Nationality Amendment Act was just enacted in India, where the Hindu nationalist BJP is currently in power under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. All minor religions were included in this new law, but Muslims were not among those who might get Indian citizenship after six years of presence in India. This law created a lot of chaos physically and also virtually and digitally. there was a case of 30 Muslim death on the other hand media was also flooded with people blaming each other(Amarasingam et al., 2022; Mogul et al., 2024) ,there was another war field throughout social media. Nepal is closely connected with India and also has open borders; every action in India directly or indirectly affects Nepal influencing Nepali citizens to be hypnotized by the Islamophobic spell of India.

## Islam in Nepal

In Nepal, Islam is minority religion. Islam was not created in Nepal; rather, it was carried there by Muslims from other Islamic nations, including Tibet, India, and Pakistan. Those who arrived from Pakistan's Kashmir province were in fact merchants. They are recognized as being more dignified and intellectual than other varieties of Islam. The earliest branch of Islam in Nepal is found in Kashmir. Islam of Indian descent visited Nepal for both economic and legal reasons. They have certain characteristics with Nepal's other prevalent Islam culture. During the reign of King Ratna Malla, a businessman from Tibet named Muslim arrived in Nepal. Despite their best efforts to impart Tibetan culture, Kashmiri and Indian Muslims eventually transformed them. Nonetheless, the majority of Nepal's Tibetan Muslims are wealthy and own significant enterprises. They choose to dress and speak like Tibetans yet adhere to certain other Muslim communities' social and cultural norms (Siddique, 2001).

The British presented Nepal with the additional land, which was primarily in the Dryland areas, as a present in 1857, during the Indian freedom movement. Muslim people had previously settled there, and it also became a portion of Nepal. They were granted land in the southern region of Nepal, which borders India, to farm and establish their own businesses. Because of this, most of the southern region of Nepal is now a manufacturing sector. Muslims reside not just in the Southern region but also in hilly regions. In the sixteenth century, Gorkha chiefs generally asked residents of the hilly region to produce artillery, agricultural implements, jewelry, etc. However, because of the persecution in India, they made their home in Nepal's mountainous area. Muslims in the mountainous region do not now have the same chances as those in the flat zone. A few of them even lack fundamental knowledge of the Muslim faith (Siddique, 2001).

Muslim youngsters did not initially have access to education. However, until 1940, children were urged to attend school. Muslim girls showed a greater preference for housekeeping. Muslim females are reluctant to go to school with guys. They could have decided to remain in the home for this purpose. It is required for everyone, boys and girls, to receive an education. Muslim schools are thought to total absence a national quality of education, nevertheless. Minimal attempt is being made by the state to standardize their educational system (Haque, 2009).

Considering there aren't many highly qualified Muslims in Nepal, it's wonderful that they may study and integrate themselves into civilization by attending school. As much of their holy material is written in Urdu and Arabic, Muslim youngsters should also study it. They learn about the fundamental beliefs and practices of their religion in their Islamic school as well. They recite the Holy Quran and follow several religious customs, including fasting and praying (Siddique, 2001; Sijapati, 2011)



Despite having a separate religious belief, they do not stand out from other religions in Nepal in terms of look. They dress alike and communicate using the same language. Their social structure and surroundings are like that of another Nepalese. They are viewed as Nepalese with just a different faith. Due to its border with India, Nepalese of any religion in the south are influenced by that country. As a result, they frequently perform rituals in an Indian fashion. Muslims in highland areas, however, are more impacted by Nepal's Hindu culture. In their social and religious lives, they incorporated numerous Hindu traditions.

Islam has two distinct religions. One is Shia, whereas the other is Sunni. Shia honors Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the fourth descendant of the Caliph of Islam, while Sunnis generally adhere to the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. There are more Sunni Muslims in Nepal. Shia Muslims are a relatively small minority in Nepal. It's noteworthy to note that Nepalese Muslims do not practice caste discrimination within their community, although coexisting with Hindus.

They encourage all varieties of Muslims to congregate at their mosque. No matter what kind of Islam and socioeconomic standing, they are not hesitant to swap marriages. The term "untouchable" does not exist in their faith (Siddique, 2001). One of the most important Islamic holidays is the celebration of sacrifice known as Eid ul-Adha. Eid ul-Fitr, which marks the conclusion of fasting, comes next. Utmost notable one is Ramadan, which is a month-long period of fasting from sunrise to sunset.

## **Methodology**

Due to the human and social aspects of my study, I decided to adopt the empirical technique. Distracts focusing on numerical or statistical data, it also focuses on human nature, attitudes, and relationships. The study design, according to (Bryman, 2012) is a strategy that aids in data collection. It incorporates a few tools, including organized interviews, self-filling surveys, and observing people, the participants. Since the questionnaire method is the most suitable one for this study topic, I also employed it. The interview can aid in understanding how different people feel and see the subject of the study. Since there hasn't been much study done in this area in the country of Nepal, an in-depth interview can help me gather data on the subject. The interview was split into two sections as well. One is a face-to-face conversation, while the other is a survey. Twenty persons in all were questioned about the subject of my investigation.

life of youths. Since this topic is not getting the attention of Nepalese yet, there is not much research done about this topic in Nepal. As a result, gathering data for quantitative analysis is challenging. And although individuals in Nepal today are aware of how technology affects social lives, the impact of digital on religious life is still an unexplored area of study. Descriptive study is much more appropriate since it allows me to always

adapt quickly with my study because this issue is mostly focused on personal views, views, and forces of nature. It resembles Bryman's description of qualitative research in many ways. He states that "One of the major themes of descriptive study is the manner in which individuals being examined comprehend and describe their social world". (Bryman, 2003). The respondent's very nature is the focus of my investigation, not how much or how many there are. In other words, it is ecological rather than quantitative. I was interested in researching how young people think and behave.

I was able to conduct a detailed investigation with a small sample thanks to the descriptive design. It provides a much deeper look at the topic. Engaging with online consumers is key to identifying the positive and negative effects that today's kids are experiencing due to the technology and to provide them with potential solutions if those effects are unfavorable. I end by arguing that, generally, a descriptive study has been faithful to my subject.

Starting from scratch was essential because there aren't many sources or studies on this subject accessible in Nepal. In my study, subjects were the participants. Youth were the major focus demographics. The participants were 12 in number between the age group of 15 to 30 who have knowledge and experience about the internet and are more involved in it. Among them 5 were Muslims and the remaining were Hindus. This age group was selected as they are highly vulnerable to internet misuse today. They are the ones in their high transition period as they are active and curious, and they think that they must get involved in every matter.

### **Data Collection**

The respondents were the main pillars for my study. Conclusions are mostly based on the interview information I used as my major source of data. I used every method I could to carry out the interview, including physical meetings, virtual meetings, and with questionnaire survey. Respondents completed questionnaire that asked them to describe their own behavior and reaction in the relevant scenario as well as their thoughts on the posed questions. Since it would restrict the participant's right to free speech, objective question types were avoided. Free responses were therefore anticipated from the respondent when they took part in the questionnaire surveys.

### **Findings**

All the selected respondents had a mobile phone from a very young age and were aware of every function of the device. It was obvious as it is counted as a very basic need of every individual no matter what age group they belong to. Mobile phone is the most used device among Nepalese rather than tabs or laptops. It's a kind of fashion and a matter of pride for youngsters below age 25.

So, When I shuffled through the pages of Respondents' answers I found out that each participant used 24/7 hours of internet. Some of them had a Wi-Fi connection in their residential area and some of them used mobile data. They seemed to keep connected to the internet every time. They also used the internet excessively to take the advantage of the spent money if there is a limited expiry date of the net. My interview result says that maximum youth are connected to the internet for more than 12 hours daily. According to them, they cannot stay away from using Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or Tik-Tok. Additionally, no one missed a day without using the internet. However, each participant said that the cost of the internet is affordable whereas 6 out of 12 participants thought it is expensive.

### **Youngsters' attitude toward social media for religious purposes**

Since the invention of the internet, individuals have had access to a wide range of religious websites, whether they are dedicated to their own religion or something else entirely. People can learn about any other faith's traditions in addition to being able to observe them. By clicking on a link with documentation about other people's faiths, youngsters do so as well but now they see they contrast and compare. Six of the respondents claimed that since they enjoy talking about their respective religious beliefs, they enjoy making internet acquaintances from all different religious backgrounds. They believe that discussing one's beliefs digitally is a viable channel. Some brought up the fact that some religious practices are false and send out incorrect ideas. Youths should use caution when participating in this kind of spiritual movement online.

Upon asking about the recent activities of Hindu nationalist fundamentalists and their Islamophobic media that blamed the Muslims for spreading Covid in the world, out of 7 Hindu participants 3 of them replied very aggressively claiming that the media was right, one of them says:

*"I have Muslim friends in my institution I was good to him until I come to know that they are the reason behind spreading the corona. I don't talk to her anymore. They think everything is caused because of their Allah's will but actually, they are the cause of such a terrible situation."*

I was bewildered to hear this; Similar response was from the other two. They said:

*"I got the information about the Muslims being the cause of the spread of infection by the Indian Media. Thank god! We know now so that we can take precautions from them, i.e., Muslims!"*

Muslims, who make up roughly 4% of the inhabitants of Nepal, have coexisted peacefully with the country's Hindu majority for many years. They came to the country as immigrants but built strong institutions. Even in

a place where religion has frequently resulted in bloodshed, Nepalis take pride in their tradition of religious tolerance.

Through well-known Indian news outlets and social media, Hindu nationalist extremists and India's Islamophobic media are using the coronavirus to spread hatred to Nepal. Influenced by neighboring nations Negative allegations have rapidly spread in Nepal when combined with the country's journals and newspapers (Budhathoki, 2020).

However, the remaining four respondents said that they were involved in commenting under the posts claiming that the news is wrong, and it spreads violence. These respondents however approached positively towards the rumors flooding social media.

The remaining Muslim respondents showed aggression towards such sold media saying that its politically affiliated and wants to create violation against each religion. Some even said that:

*“Media is to be blamed to create such sensation and arise negative attitude, however as a Muslim I would say, it’s our mistake too for not being able to be involved enough in to media to be stopping or fighting against such rumors”*

So here, Muslim respondents believe that being in the minority and nountable to play enough on media made the news spread faster without anyone stopping them.

On one hand some youngsters were influenced by the media that their attitude started changing and on the one hand, such manufactured tales have tarnished India's media's reputation in Nepal. In Nepal, the hashtag *#RIPIndianMedia* became popular. Yet even Nepali journalists, news websites, and the general people published and tweeted anti-Islamic content, leading to the trending hashtag *#IslamophobiaInNepal*.

Upon asking how far they believe in Social Media Majority of respondents claimed that they do believe on it most of the time but sometimes when videos or talks seem artificial to them, they don't. So basically, it depends upon their will to believe or not. Whereas Some Muslim respondents said:

*“Media is no more a place to rely on especially when there is negative news about Muslims.”*

The respondent seemed to be hurt by the false accusation on Muslims that somehow influenced the behavior of non-Muslims in the nation.

Digging further, asking about their inclusion and having friends on social media; Despite the fact that social media is used for socializing, most teenagers are unlikely to go online and look for new acquaintances. Instead, they preferred to wait for friend requests from other people. The majority of the young participants did not like looking for new acquaintances. With the friends they already have, they are content. One participant said that she was too nervous to make friends on her own, so she preferred to wait for others to approach her. Two of the teenagers stated that they do not enjoy sharing their activities with the world, even though the majority use social media to interact with others. They instead kept their life secret as people may interpret them and they be caught in problems. Some people disliked displaying themselves online. They did not want to be disturbed, which is why. One participant even tried to cancel her Facebook account due to pointless posts made by others. Social media, in her opinion, is a time waster. Instead of wasting time on Facebook, she attempted to concentrate on doing something helpful. She was using it again, though, merely to get in touch with her pals, whom she had missed since moving to the new place. She says:

*“Sometimes the videos and posts on Social media is very negative that make me feel depressed making her to over think the situation resulting to bad mood” She further says, “Sometimes I want to be nice to my Muslim fellow’s but at the back of my mind those news of social media makes me not be behave good with them.”*

Youths seem to be dangling in ways to believe or not to believe in social media, or how to behave or not behave and what reaction they should show and shouldn't. Some respondents also claimed that sometimes they go on debating on social media supporting their own faith until late at night. In case if they lose or if the other respondents start using bad language it leads them to aggression and feeling hate towards the whole community of that faith.

One of the respondents who belong to conservative Hindu family says:

*“Social media is full of millions of ideas. Once You dip inside you are even more confused than before. My Parents are kind of extreme in their religion, but I am not. I have some Muslim friends and they are polite. Watching the news over media, especially the news that got spread against Muslims during Covid and some extremists Hindus wanted to take it as an advantage to highlight and blame Muslims weren't right and I don't support it.”*

This was a good response from an undergraduate Student. At the same question, another respondent says:

*“Muslims always want to be dominating. They think their religion is perfect and none else.”*

Upon asking Why he think so, He replied:

*“I saw much news on Indian channels and every time they show such news, our media doesn't talk about this stuff though its important.”*

Again, this was a shocking reply. No wonder, the media is swapping off the youths into a violent mindset. If the media had been a free space without any corruption and without being sold to any political parties, it would have been a better place to spread peace, but the case is the opposite.

## **Conclusion**

As a Nepali Muslim citizen, I am really concerned, which is what provoked me to learn about the current trend affecting Nepalese youngsters. With the development of internet connections, Nepal, a developing nation, has recently experienced a boom in its digital media and gadgets. There have been about equal good and unfavorable consequences when examining the impact of the internet on social living. Yet, since it affects their thoughts, emotions, and entire attitude, the adverse impacts are more severe than the favorable benefits. Some participants—and yet not all—have previously gone through these transformations in their personal lives. It can result in internet addiction if they continue to use it needlessly and excessively. Additionally, it has been seen people using the internet to argue with their Muslim friends. It is because Nepal is currently in an environment where the country's shift from underdevelopment to development in political, social, and economic sectors can be plainly recognized. This might be seen as a clash between contemporary and traditional beliefs.

The matter of acting is the outside media that is openly brainwashing the youths. The attitude towards Muslims in India has altered, especially following the ascent of Modi. In any event, India has a long history of portraying Muslims badly. To foster hostility with Indian Muslims, India tried to promote misinformation about Nepali Muslims. India has consistently assaulted Nepali Muslims, whether it is in the name of mosques and madrassas in the Terai border area or on other grounds. This misinformation if spread among youth will cause big hostile placing Muslim minorities in a problematic situation. Youngsters need to be educated about the different faith equally. They need to know from a very young age that No religion provokes fighting and killing and it's their prime responsibility to respect each religion. Early teachings will shield them from getting swapped away by the corrupt media of the recent time.

The surge in Racism is concerning Nepal's Muslims, but they are hopeful that their friends and neighbors will prevent things from growing uglier. Many cite the fact that the violence that erupted in 1992 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, a mosque constructed on land that was also cherished by Hindus in Ayodhya, India, failed to cross the border. On social media, however, there has been a steady increase in assaults against Nepali

Muslims. There haven't been any documented violent assaults against Muslims, and the majority of Nepalese still oppose attempts to sow division. Yet it needs proper precautions and new policies to stop the neighboring country from entering Nepal with their strategies. Nepal needs to increase the height of its borders to protect every sect of the land.

### Limitation of the Study

The research is yet to highlight many factors and needs a more detailed study. My research has a limitation on respondents. I chose a certain age group and studied only the youngsters excluding political leaders, parents, and teachers, as they all can be an important subject to study on how they utilize social media and how they can help in shaping the mind of future individuals of the nation. There isn't much research done on this topic in Nepal, especially concerning the religious tolerance and social media. However, similar research of other countries guided me to come up with this, yet I couldn't find any research done on Muslim minority countries. Nevertheless, the research is about technology and technology is improving each day, bringing changes in youths' thoughts, lifestyle, and attitudes so the study might not be beneficial in the future. However, Since the world seem to be concerned about Muslims and there are a lot of misinformation and Islamophobic thoughts in the air, my research can be a reminder to the leaders of the nations to take preventing measures to avoid any kind of splits and violation in the nation.

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